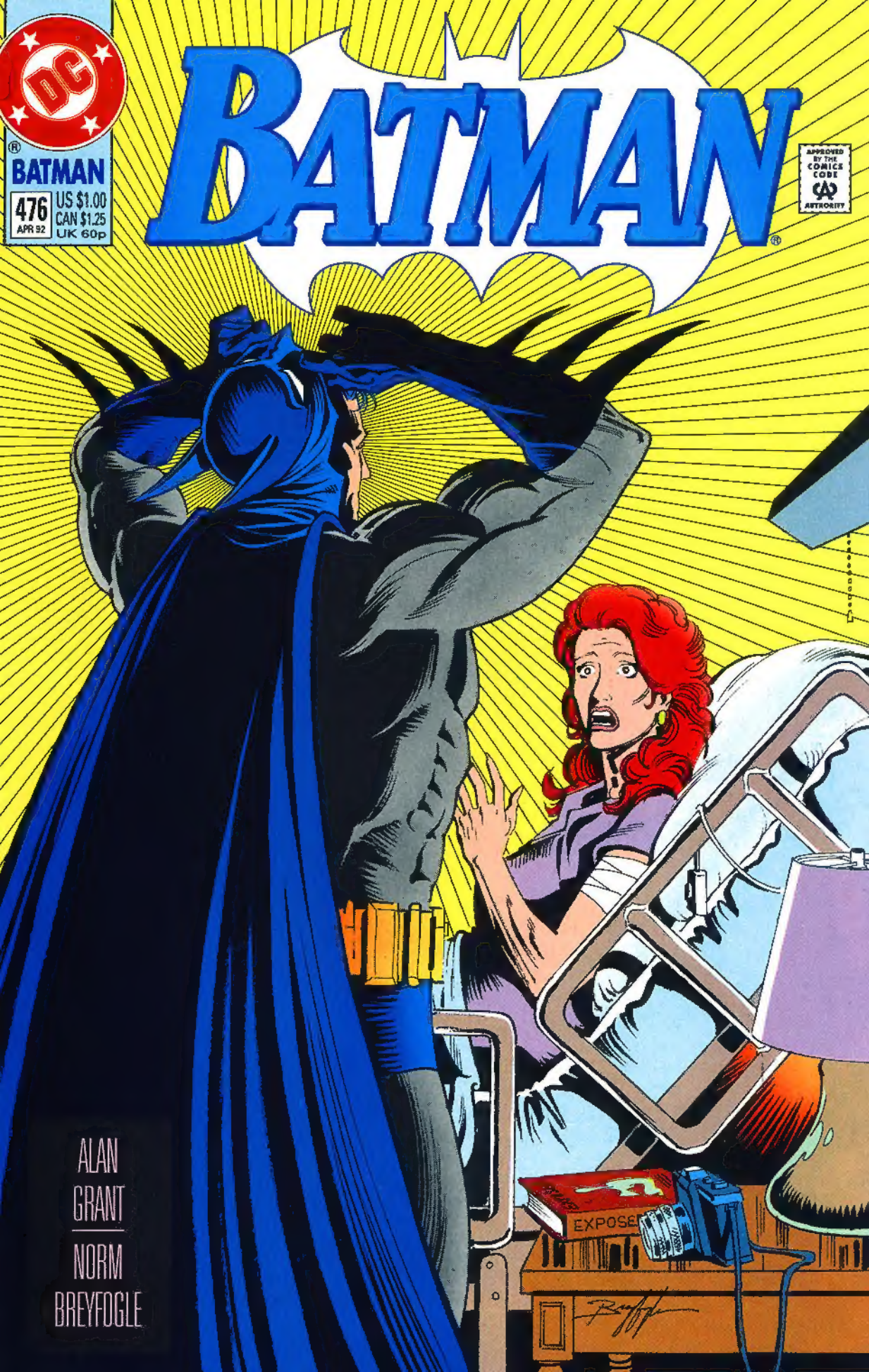
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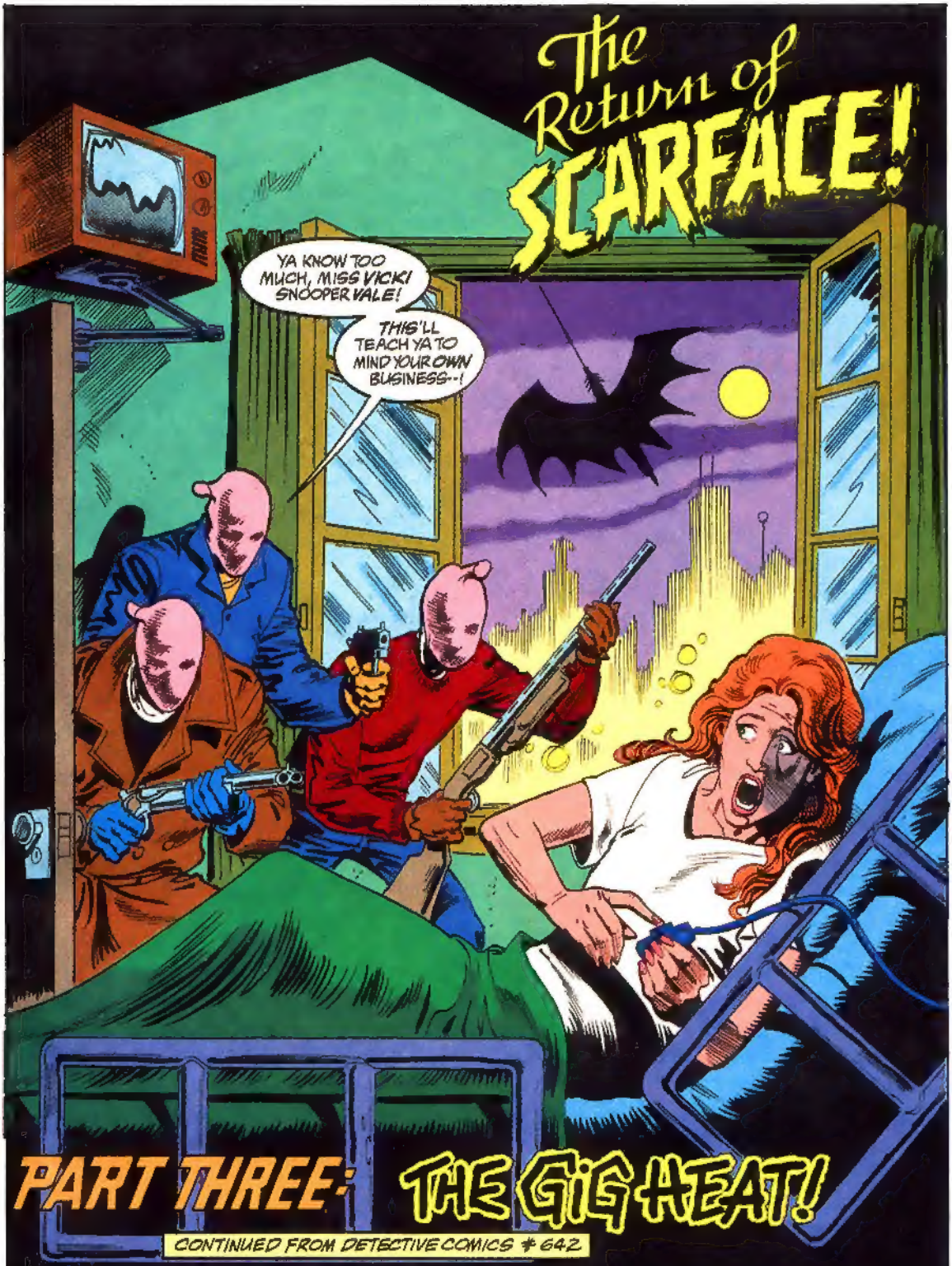
EXPOSE
ALAN GRANT
NORM BREYFOGLE


The Return of SCARFACE!
YA KNOW TOO MUCH, MISS VICKI SNOOPERVALE!
THIS'LL TEACH YA TO MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS--!
PART THREE: THE GIG HEAT!
CONTINUED FROM DETECTIVE COMICS #642

ALAN GRANT WRITER | NORM BREYFOGLE ARTIST | ADRIENNE ROY COLORIST | TODD KLEIN LETTERER | KELLEY PUCKETT ASSOC. EDITOR | DENNIS O'NEIL EDITOR | BOB KANE BATMAN CREATOR

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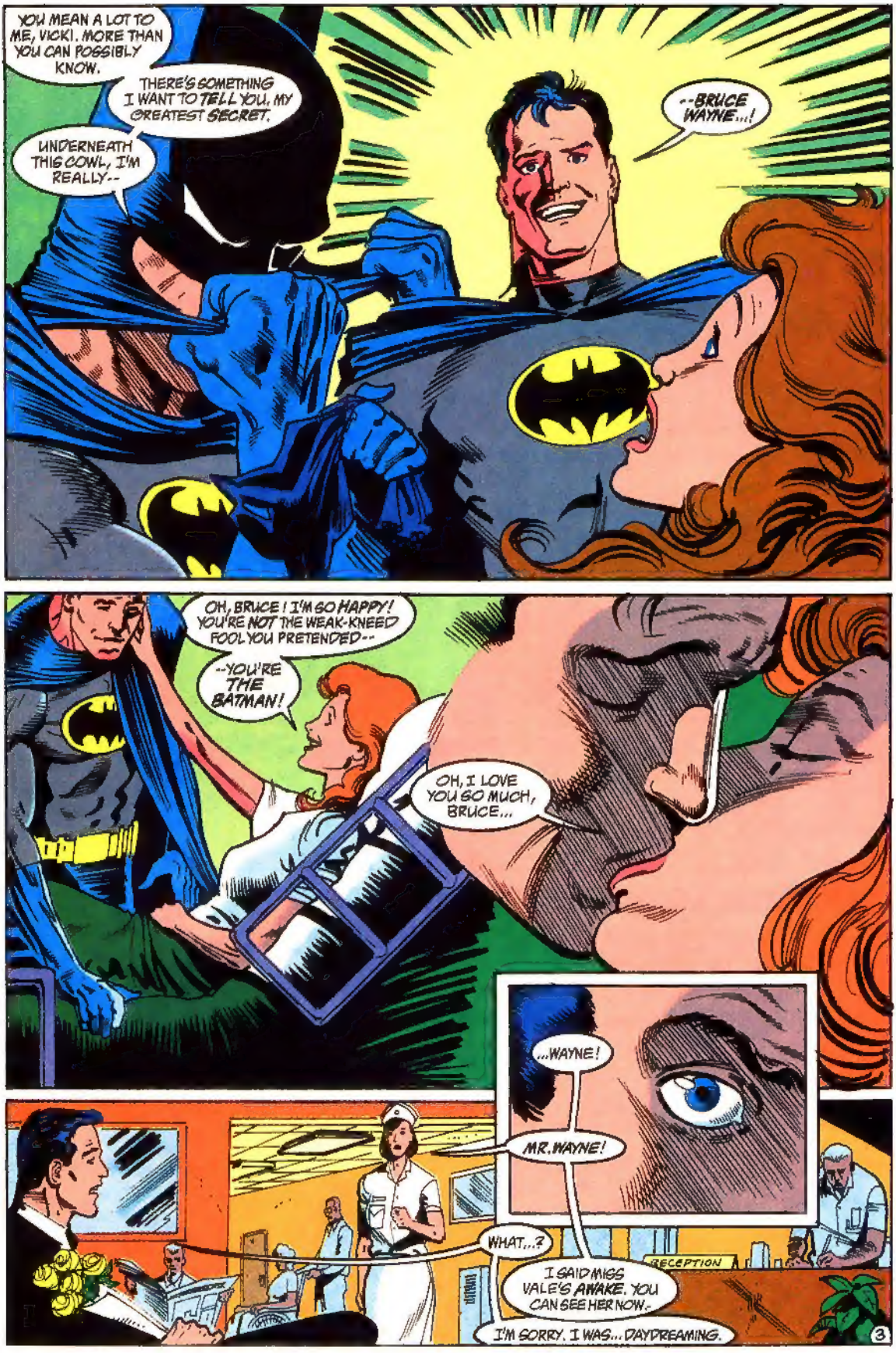
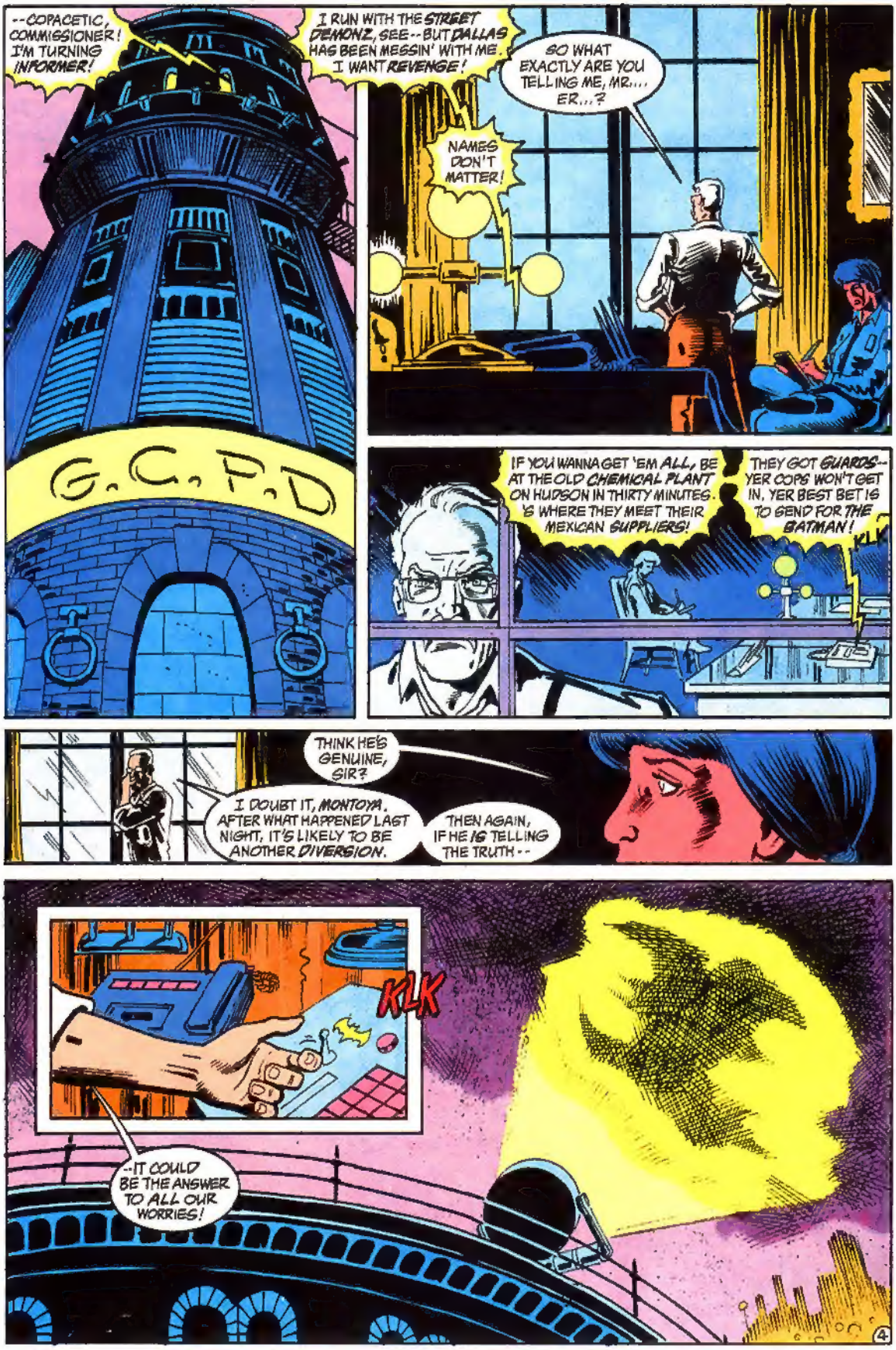
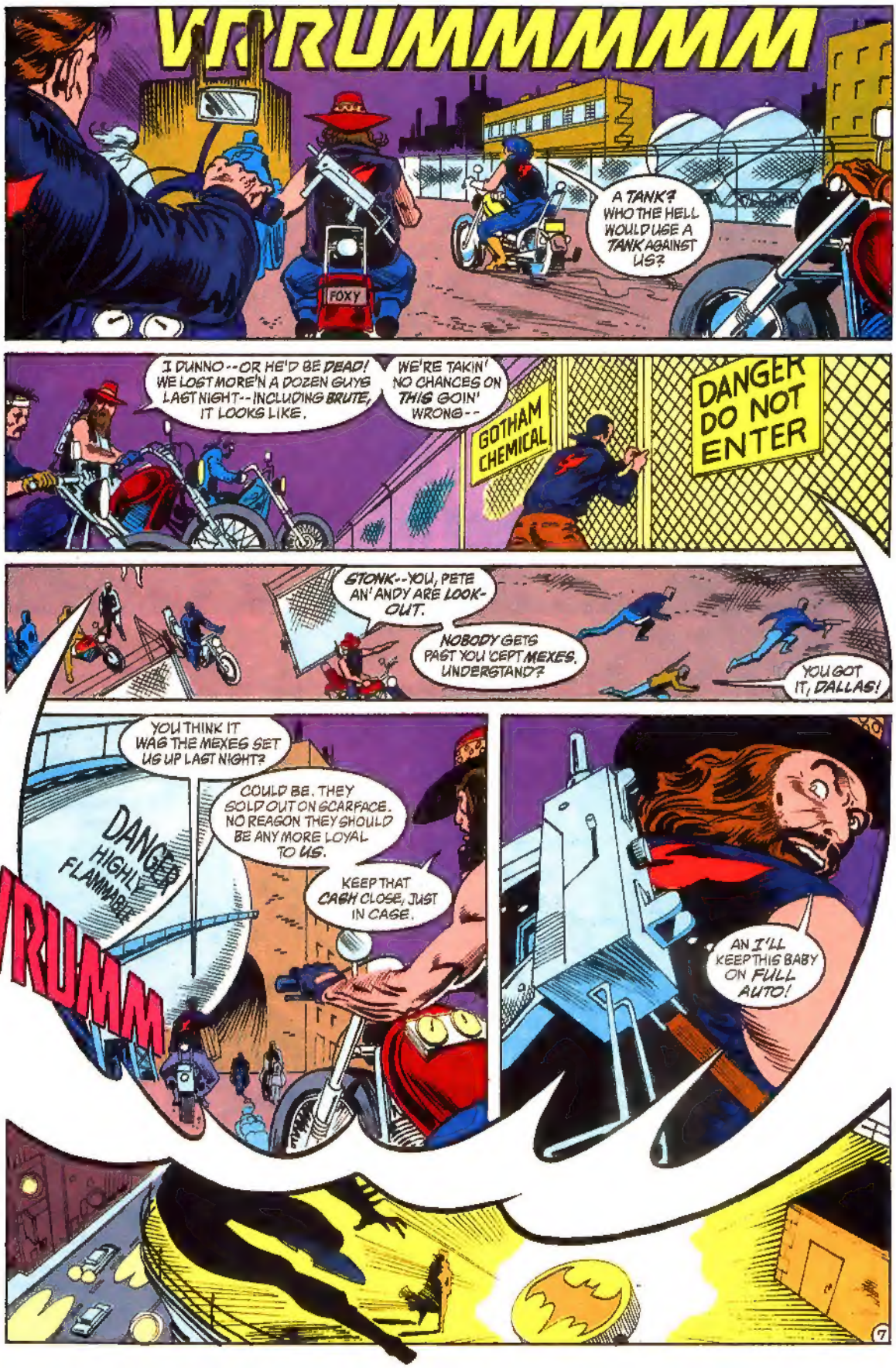
SKIK!
SPANG!
BLAM
SAY YER PRAYERS, SIS--
AAH!
NOT TONIGHT, CREEPS--
--THE LADY'S UNDER SPECIAL PROTECTION!
KKT
BONK
SPK!
KPT
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
Y-YES, THANK YOU.
BUT--WHAT DID YOU MEAN? SPECIAL PROTECTION?
2


YOU MEAN A LOT TO ME, VICKI. MORE THAN YOU CAN POSSIBLY KNOW.
THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO TELL YOU, MY GREATEST SECRET.
UNDERNEATH THIS COWL, I'M REALLY--
--BRUCE WAYNE...!
OH, BRUCE! I'M SO HAPPY! YOU'RE NOT THE WEAK-KNEED FOOL YOU PRETENDED--
--YOU'RE THE BATMAN!
OH, I LOVE YOU SO MUCH, BRUCE...
...WAYNE!
MR. WAYNE!
WHAT...?
I SAID MISS VALE'S AWAKE. YOU CAN SEE HER NOW.
I'M SORRY. I WAS... DAYDREAMING.
RECEPTION
3


--COPACETIC, COMMISSIONER! I'M TURNING INFORMER!
I RUN WITH THE STREET DEMONZ, SEE--BUT DALLAS HAS BEEN MESSIN' WITH ME. I WANT REVENGE!
SO WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU TELLING ME, MR.... ER...?
NAMES DON'T MATTER!
G.C.P.D
IF YOU WANNA GET 'EM ALL, BE AT THE OLD CHEMICAL PLANT ON HUDSON IN THIRTY MINUTES. 'S WHERE THEY MEET THEIR MEXICAN SUPPLIERS!
THEY GOT GUARDS--YER COPS WON'T GET IN, YER BEST BET IS TO SEND FOR THE BATMAN!
KLK
THINK HE'S GENUINE, SIR?
I DOUBT IT, MONTOYA. AFTER WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT, IT'S LIKELY TO BE ANOTHER DIVERSION.
THEN AGAIN, IF HE IS TELLING THE TRUTH--
KLK
--IT COULD BE THE ANSWER TO ALL OUR WORRIES!

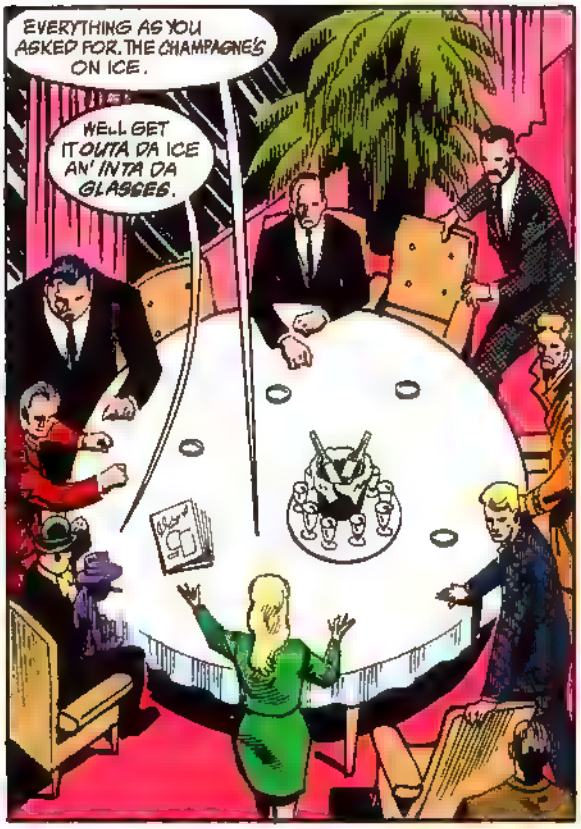
NICE WORK, GRUTE!
YA THINK GORDON'LL BITE, BOSS?
SURE HE'LL BITE! HE'LL SEND IN HIS CAPED PET-- AN' IF DA SARGE'S GIZMOS WORK, WE CAN SAY "BYEBYE" TA DA DEMONZ, DA GATMAN AND THOSE BACKSTABBIN' MEXICAN TURNCOATS!
I DID ALL YA SAID, SCARFACE. GUESS I'LL JUST BE RUNNIN' ALONG--
WE'RE IN DIS TAGETHER--TO THE BITTER END, RIGHT?
WH-WHATEVER YOU SAY, BOSS...!
GOOD. TELL YA WHAT-- WHY DON'T WE GO OUT AN' CELEGRATE?
HEY! I WON'T HEAR OF IT, OLD BUDDY!
SMARTEN UP, GUYS-- AN' LEAVE DA GUNS HERE. TONIGHT, WE'RE STRICKLY LEGIT!
HA HA HA HA HA
MOMENTS EARLIER...
I WONDERED IF YOU'D COME.
5

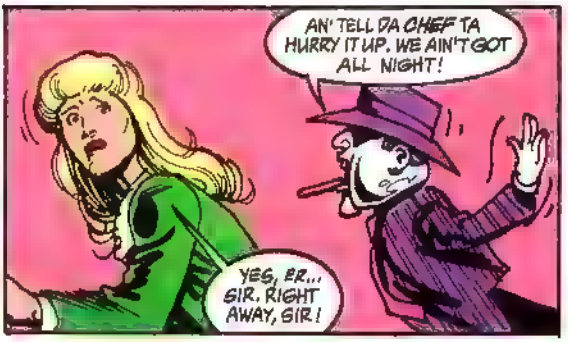
LAME QUESTION--HOW DO YOU FEEL?
ABOUT TWICE AS BAD AS I LOOK! I SUPPOSE I'M LUCKY TO BE ALIVE.
POOR HORTEN GOT IT WORSE. FOUR BULLETS IN HIS LEGS...!
I'M SORRY FOR HIM. DID YOU SEE WHO--?
NO. IT WAS DARK--THEIR HEADLIGHTS WERE IN OUR EYES. MY CAMERA, FILM, ALL OUR EVIDENCE--WAS DESTROYED.
I'M SURE THE POLICE WILL FIND THEM.
BUT THAT ISN'T WHY I CAME, VICKI. IT MAY NOT BE THE RIGHT TIME OR PLACE FOR IT--BUT I HAVE...SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO SAY.
HIS MOUTH IS SUDDENLY DRY. HIS TONGUE FEELS FAT AND SWOLLEN. THIS IS A SECRET HE THOUGHT HE'D NEVER SHARE. IT ISN'T COMING EASY.
WELL? WHAT...?
BUT HE LOVES HER. HE WANTS HER BACK. AND THIS IS THE ONLY WAY HE MIGHT GET HER--
VICKI, I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I'M NOT...WHAT I SEEM.
I...I'M--
6

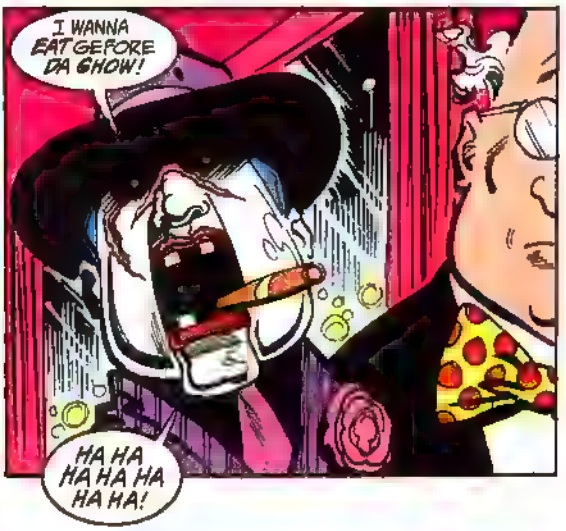

VRRUMMMMM
FOXY
A TANK? WHO THE HELL WOULD USE A TANK AGAINST US?
I DUNNO--OR HE'D BE DEAD! WE LOST MORE'N A DOZEN GUYS LAST NIGHT--INCLUDING BRUTE, IT LOOKS LIKE.
WE'RE TAKIN' NO CHANCES ON THIS GOIN' WRONG--
GOTHAM CHEMICAL
DANGER DO NOT ENTER
STONK--YOU, PETE AN' ANDY ARE LOOK-OUT.
NOBODY GETS PAST YOU 'CEPT MEXES, UNDERSTAND?
YOU GOT IT, DALLAS!
YOU THINK IT WAS THE MEXES SET US UP LAST NIGHT?
COULD BE. THEY SOLD OUT ON SCARFACE. NO REASON THEY SHOULD BE ANY MORE LOYAL TO US.
KEEP THAT CASH CLOSE, JUST IN CASE.
DANGER HIGHLY FLAMMABLE
VRUMM
AN I'LL KEEP THIS BABY ON FULL AUTO!

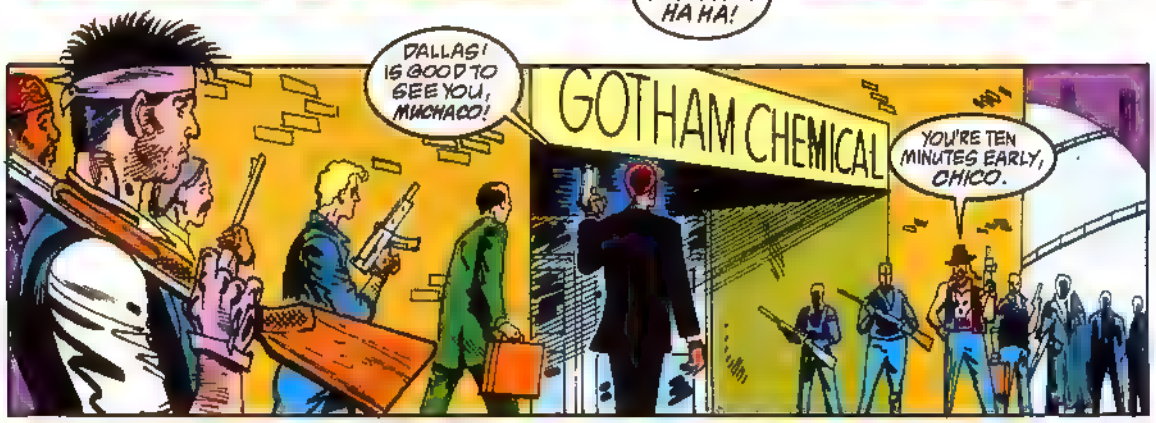
SERGEANT ESSEN...?
JIM HAD AN ANONYMOUS PHONE CALL, TOLD US WHERE THE STREET DEMONZ' BIG DEAL IS GOING DOWN.
HE WENT ON WITH THE SQUAD. HE ASKED ME TO WAIT FOR YOU.
ANONYMOUS... IT COULD BE ANOTHER DIVERSION, LIKE LAST NIGHT'S ARSON ATTACK. IT'D TAKE THE HEAT OFF THE REAL MEET.
OR IT COULD BE A TRAP!
WE CONSIDERED THAT. THE CALLER SAID ONLY YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO GET INSIDE. BUT JIM HAD TO GO.
THEY'RE AT THE OLD CHEM-PLANT ON HUDSON.
CLEAR ACROSS TOWN -- AND I DON'T HAVE THE BATMOBILE!
THE BATMAN NEEDS A CHAUFFEUR? COME ON!
STAIRS
VRRMM
VRRRRR
COMMISSIONER? TWO VEHICLES--HEADING FOR THE PLANT!
LOOKS LIKE OUR MAN WASN'T LYING! MAINTAIN YOUR POSITION, BULLOCK. WAIT FOR MY SIGNAL.
8

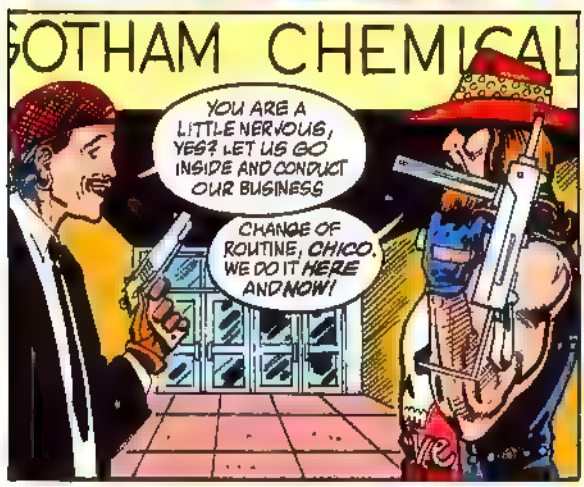
YOU SPOTTED THOSE GUARDS YET?
YES, SIR. AT LEAST TWO OF THEM.
POLICE
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE BATMAN'S GOING TO SHOW. WELL, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO WAIT.
MONTOYA -- SHOW THEM WHERE THE GUARDS ARE. I WANT THEM TAKEN AS QUIETLY AS POSSIBLE.
THEN PASS THE WORD--WE'RE MOVING IN!
THE NAME'S SCARFACE, DOLL. I BELIEVE I GOT A REGERVATION...?
IF YOU'D WALK THIS WAY, GENTLEMEN.
SURE THING, BABE!
HAW HAW!
SLAP!
CUT IT OUT, YA GIG GALOOT! AIN'T YA GOT NO CLASS?
9

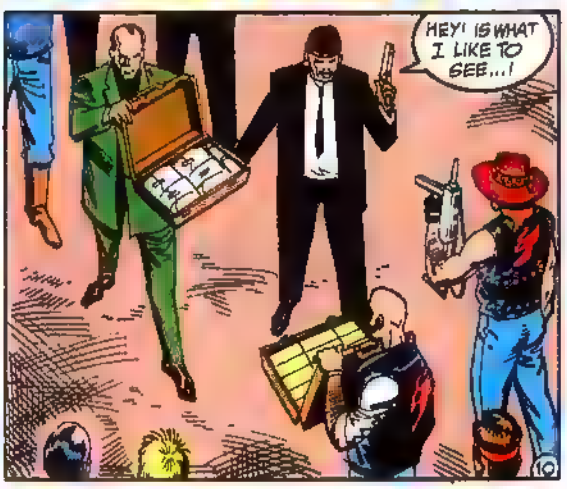

EVERYTHING AS YOU ASKED FOR. THE CHAMPAGNE'S ON ICE.
WELL GET IT OUTA DA ICE AN' INTA DA GLASSES.


AN' TELL DA CHEF TA HURRY IT UP. WE AIN'T GOT ALL NIGHT!
YES, ER... SIR. RIGHT AWAY, SIR!

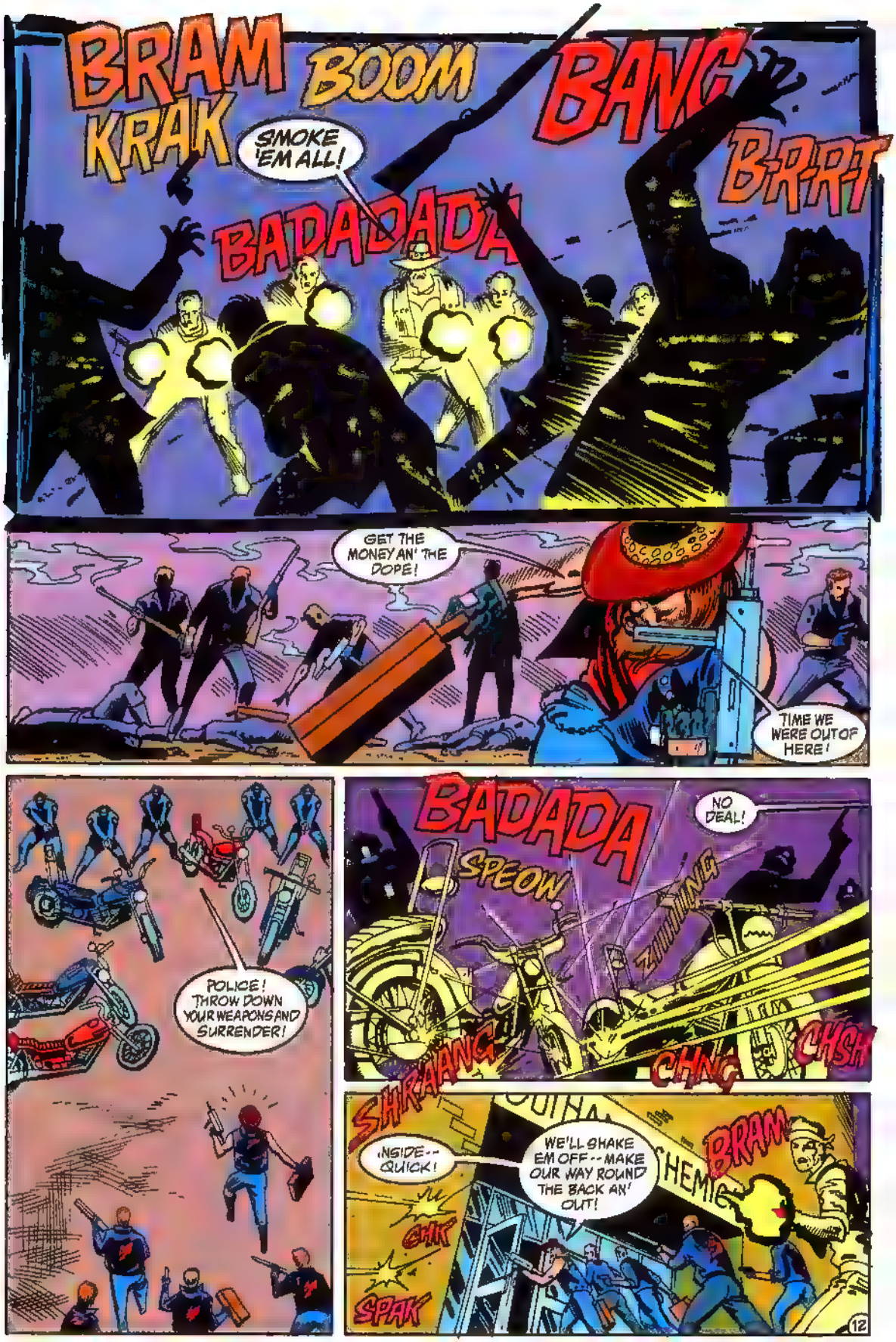

I WANNA EAT BEFORE DA SHOW!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!


DALLAS! IS GOOD TO SEE YOU, MUCHACO!
GOTHAM CHEMICAL
YOU'RE TEN MINUTES EARLY, CHICO.


OTHAM CHEMICAL
YOU ARE A LITTLE NERVOUS, YES? LET US GO INSIDE AND CONDUCT OUR BUSINESS
CHANGE OF ROUTINE, CHICO. WE DO IT HERE AND NOW!

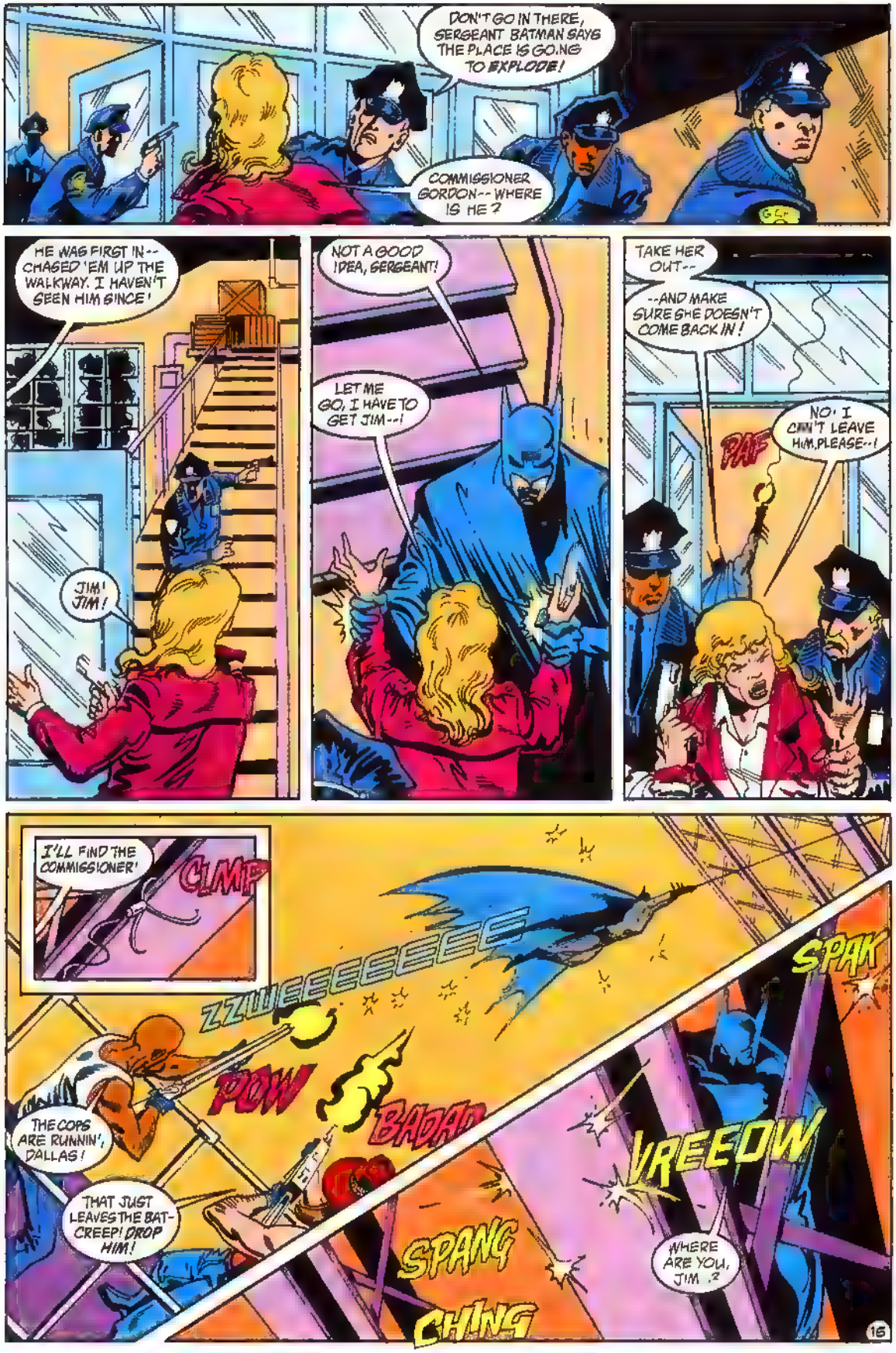

HEY! IS WHAT I LIKE TO SEE...!

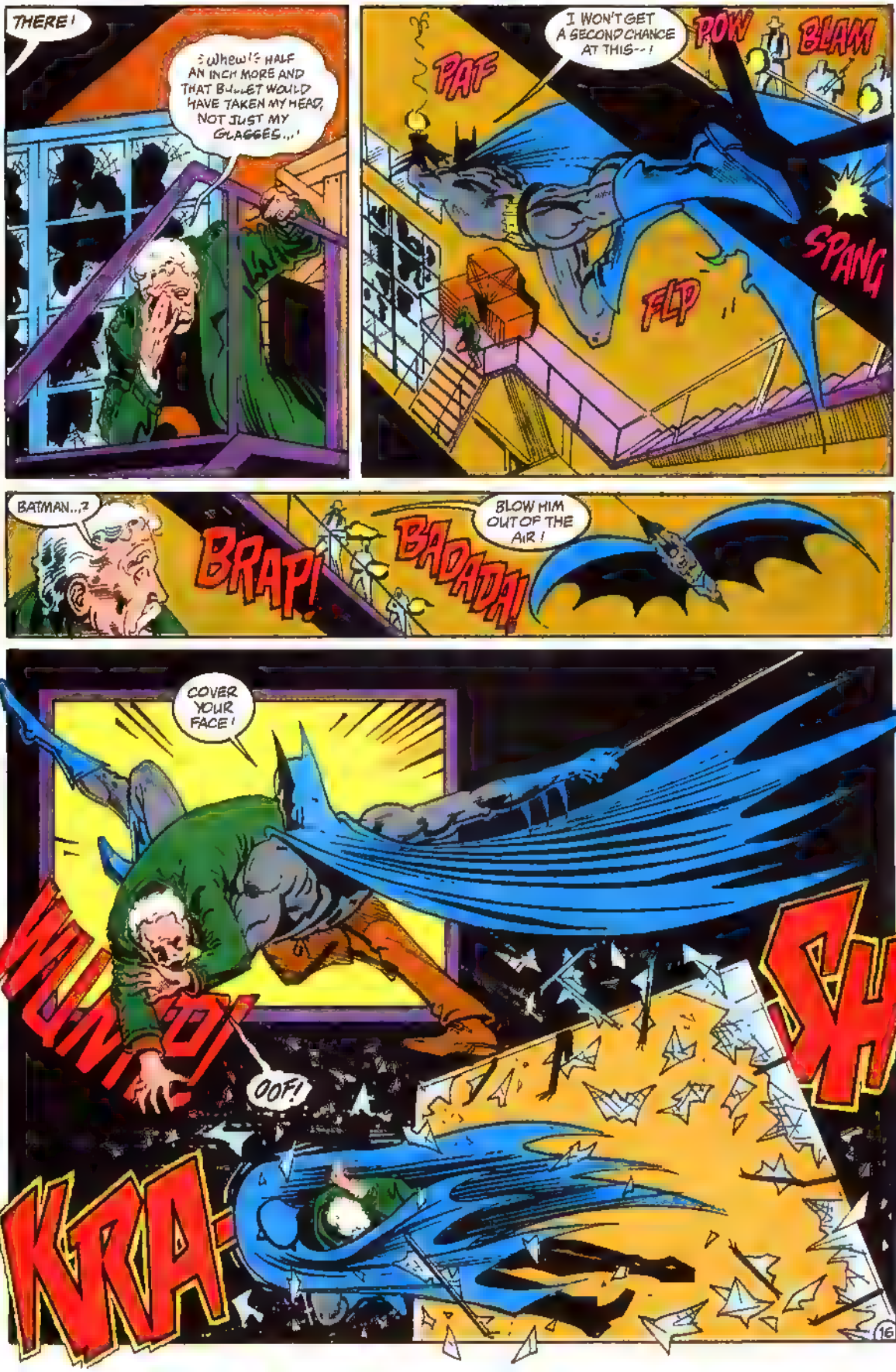
CLP
!
CHOP
BADADADA
COPS! COPS! IT'S A RAID!
COPS! YA DOUBLE-DEALIN' SCUZZBALL--
NOBODY SETS UP THE DEMONZ AN' WALKS AWAY!
BADADA

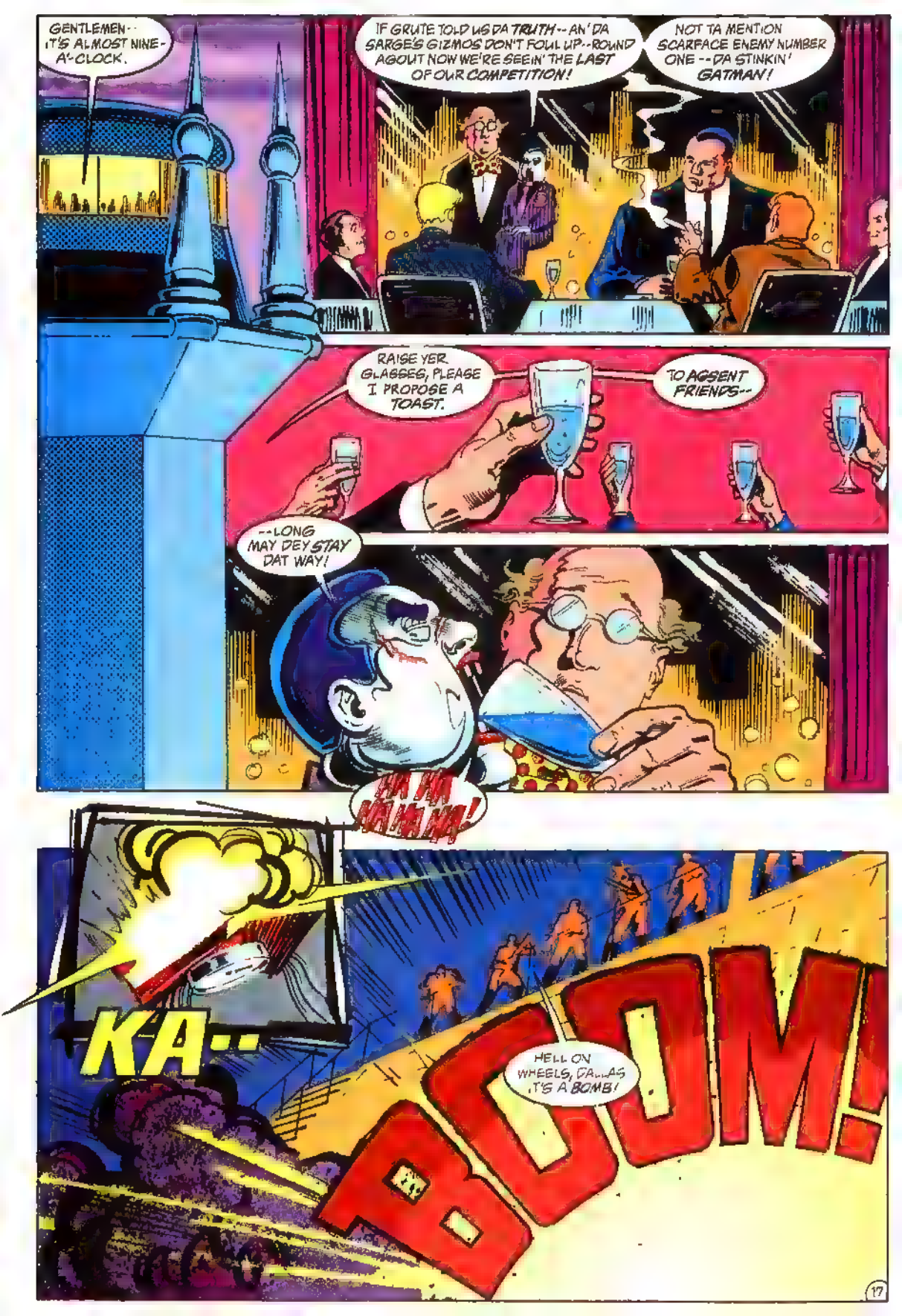

BRAM
KRAK
BOOM
SMOKE 'EM ALL!
BANG
B-R-R-T
BADADADA
GET THE MONEY AN' THE DOPE!
TIME WE WERE OUTOF HERE!
POLICE! THROW DOWN YOUR WEAPONS AND SURRENDER!
BADADA
SPEOW
NO DEAL!
ZWUNG
SHRAANG
CHNG
CHSH
SHRAANG
INSIDE--QUICK!
WE'LL SHAKE EM OFF--MAKE OUR WAY ROUND THE BACK AN' OUT!
BRAM
CHK
SPAK
12

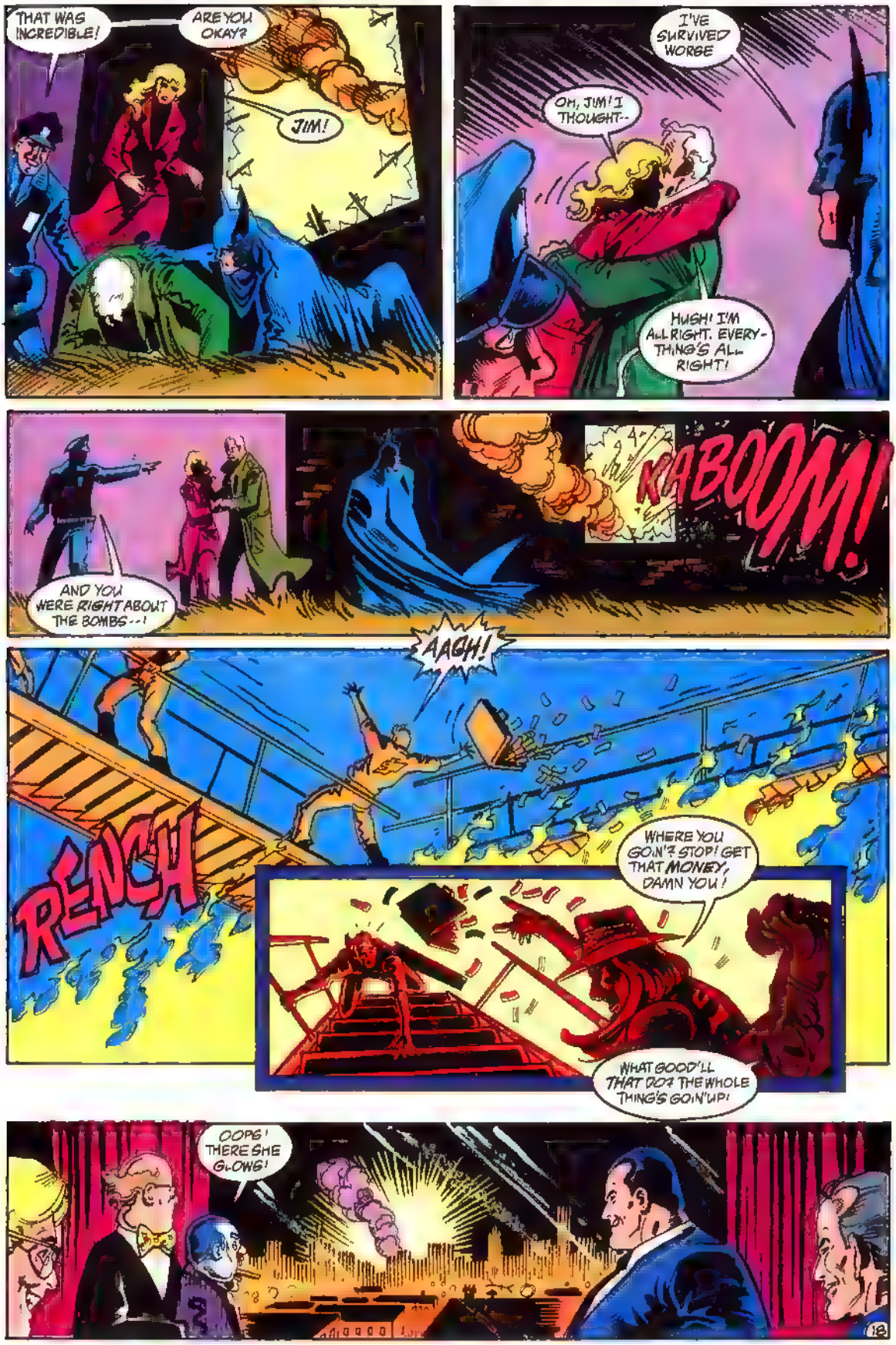
SOMEBODY CALL AN AMBULANCE! TELL BULLOCK AND HIS MEN TO MOVE IN ON THE BACK EXIT!
POW!
BLAM!
BRAM!
UNGH!
GUNFIRE!
CHANK!
GOTHAM CHEM
I JUST HOPE WE'RE NOT TOO LATE--!
SKREECH!
BAM! BAM!
KLK
BLAGT! IT'S JAMMED--!
JAM THIS, SUCKER!

GET DOWN!
FAIP
PUP
SPAT
CHT
PAF
WHAT THE DEVIL--?
A BOMB-- AND SET ON A TIMER!
GET OUT! THERE'S A BOMB!
ALL OF YOU GET OUT!
YOU DEMONZ! COME DOWN! THE WHOLE PLACE IS WIRED!
IT COULD GO UP ANY T--
BRAM
POW
BANG
PING
VRANG
SPEEOW


DON'T GO IN THERE, SERGEANT BATMAN SAYS THE PLACE IS GOING TO EXPLODE!
COMMISSIONER GORDON-- WHERE IS HE?
G.C.P.
HE WAS FIRST IN-- CHASED 'EM UP THE WALKWAY. I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE!
JIM! JIM!
NOT A GOOD IDEA, SERGEANT!
LET ME GO, I HAVE TO GET JIM--!
TAKE HER OUT--
--AND MAKE SURE SHE DOESN'T COME BACK IN!
PAF
NO! I CAN'T LEAVE HIM, PLEASE--!
I'LL FIND THE COMMISSIONER!
CLMP
ZZWEEEEEEEEE
POW
BADAP
SPAK
VREEOW
SPANG
CHING
THE COPS ARE RUNNIN', DALLAS!
THAT JUST LEAVES THE BAT-CREEP! DROP HIM!
WHERE ARE YOU, JIM..?


THERE!
: Whew!: HALF AN INCH MORE AND THAT BULLET WOULD HAVE TAKEN MY HEAD, NOT JUST MY GLASSES...!
I WON'T GET A SECOND CHANCE AT THIS--!
PAF
POW
BLAM
FLP
SPANG
BATMAN...?
BRAP!
BADADA!
BLOW HIM OUT OF THE AIR!
COVER YOUR FACE!
WUMP!
OOF!
KRA-
SH
16


GENTLEMEN-- IT'S ALMOST NINE-A'-CLOCK.
IF GRUTE TOLD US DA TRUTH -- AN' DA SARGE'S GIZMOS DON'T FOUL UP--ROUND AGOUT NOW WE'RE SEEIN' THE LAST OF OUR COMPETITION!
NOT TA MENTION SCARFACE ENEMY NUMBER ONE --DA STINKIN' GATMAN!
RAISE YER GLASSES, PLEASE I PROPOSE A TOAST.
TO AGSENT FRIENDS--
--LONG MAY DEY STAY DAT WAY!
HA HA HA HA HA!
-KA--
HELL ON WHEELS, DALLAS IT'S A BOMB!
BOOM!


THAT WAS INCREDIBLE!
ARE YOU OKAY?
JIM!
I'VE SURVIVED WORSE
OH, JIM! I THOUGHT--
HUSH! I'M ALL RIGHT. EVERY-THING'S ALL RIGHT!
KABOOM!
AND YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT THE BOMBS--!
AAGH!
RENCH
WHERE YOU GO'N'? STOP! GET THAT MONEY, DAMN YOU!
WHAT GOOD'LL THAT DO? THE WHOLE THING'S GO'N'UP!
OOPS! THERE SHE G-OWS!

FUH-BAROOM!
TOP O' THE WORLD, MA!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!
DAT WAG A GREAT MEAL, GOYS! WE'LL EAT HERE AGAIN!
BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND, BOSS--
OTHAM WIN OWERS
19

MAYBE WE DID GET BATMAN AN' THE DEMONZ - BUT WE DIDN'T GET THE MONEY - OR THE DOPE!
HMM. DIS AIN'T ABOUT MONEY! I GOT CASH STASHED ALL OVER DA CITY!
IT'S ABOUT POWER. IT'S ABOUT WHO GIVES DA ORDERS--AN' WHO OGEYS 'EM!
IT'S ABOUT FEAR--ABOUT LETTIN' EVERYBODY AN' HIS MONKEY KNOW WHO'S BOSS!
A.IN'T DAT A FACT NOW, GRUTE?
CASE CLOSED. THE DEMONZ AND THEIR SUPPLIERS ARE FINISHED. MORE LIVES DESTROYED IN THE NAME OF GREED--IN THE SERVICE OF DRUGS
ALMOST TWO OF MY FRIENDS AMONG THEM
THE WAY ESSEN WENT IN AFTER HIM--NOTHING MATTERED EXCEPT THE MAN SHE LOVED.
GOTHAM GENERAL HOSPITAL
20

AND HER LOVE MIGHT HAVE KILLED THE BOTH OF THEM!
MISS VALE? I KNOW IT'S LATE--BUT YOUR VISITOR'S BACK. DO YOU WANT TO SEE HIM?
I CAN'T SLEEP, YES--SEND HIM IN.
SORRY I HAD TO RUSH OFF LIKE THAT--I COMPLETELY FORGOT ABOUT THAT BUSINESS SUPPER!
JUST LIKE YOU, BRUCE!
YOU WERE GOING TO TELL ME SOMETHING...?
I WAS? OH! YES, OF COURSE.
I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW, VICK!...
EVEN IF WE'RE NOT GOING OUT TOGETHER, YOU'RE VERY IMPORTANT TO ME.
TAKE BETTER CARE OF YOURSELF. PLEASE...!
AND I THOUGHT IT WAS SOMETHING WORLD-SHATTERING!
OH, BRUCE--YOU'RE SO SWEET...!
WELL, OLD BUDDY--I GUESS THIS IS WHERE WE PART COMPANY...!
21

VENTRILOQUIST-- PLEASE DON'T LET HIM DO THIS!
NO USE APPEALING TO ME, BRUTE. HE'S THREATENED ME WITH DIRE RETRIBUTION NEXT TIME I DON'T DO AS HE SAYS.
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN WITH THIS ONE, I'M AFRAID.
SCARFACE, PLEASE, I--
AW, SHUDDUP! I HATE A GUY DAT WHINES!
RHINO--!
NO!!
SPALOOSH!!
HEY! IF DA GOOTS DON'T FIT--
--YA CAN ALWAYS GRING 'EM GACK!
HAHAHAHA HAHAHAHA!
The End

BAT-SIGNALS

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Hi, there. For those of you who didn't read last month's DETECTIVE—and why didn't you?—my name is Scott Peterson. I'm Denny O'Neil's new assistant, and just pleased as punch about it. We've got some catching up to do, so we'll be looking at a few selections from the tons of mail we got on BATMAN #467-#469, a.k.a. the Shadow Box trilogy. Onward and upward...

Dear Denny and Kelley,

Ain't life weird?

A couple of years back, Robin was voted to death. It seemed that every other letter you read was calling for a lone Dark Knight, saying the time of the Boy Wonder was past...and I really thought that maybe the kid had had his time in the sun.

Fast forward. Suddenly, there's a new, "hip" Robin with a cool haircut and a 90's attitude. He gets his own limited series which outsells everything else on the market...and with BATMAN #467, he even managed to nudge the pointy-eared guy off the cover. So how long will it be before they start calling for the end of the bat-guy in order to give Tim Drake more exposure?

On a completely unconnected note, I love the Lyle/Mushynsky art in this issue. The drawings of Batman seemed at times to contain touches of Dick Sprang and Carmine Infantino while still remaining firmly grounded in the 90's. Good work.

Rock and roll,
Rol Hirst
Rushgrove Farm
Holt Head, Slaithwaite
Huddersfield, W. Yorks, HD7 5TY
England

* * * * *

Dear Batmaniacs,

Tim forgot the most important rule in the comics-universe: "If the body isn't found...(and even then...)!" But after all, Tim's still in the year of his apprenticeship.

Till the 900-number
the BLUE PANTHER a.k.a. Kashif
Ostring-74
W-6231 Schwalbach
Germany

P.S. What was that about Harold being the new Robin? Will he get a miniseries by the fabulous Dixon-Lyle?

Stranger things have happened. Actually, that's not quite true. Nothing that *strange has ever happened.*

* * * * *

Dear Batmates,

They say in comic-book land that a person doesn't really die unless the hero sees the corpse. Now that the King Snake has survived a fall of fifty storeys from his own building, I have one question: how did he do that? He's blind, and Shiva would never leave that guy alive. What's the deal? Maybe Robin should have checked out the site where he supposedly landed before he bugged out.

It's nice to know that Robin has his own personal villains, Lynx and the King Snake. If someone passes up Batman and instead wants Robin dead, he must really be teed off with him. You would be, too, if you'd been beaten up for the first time by a 13-year-old child.

Kudos to Lyle on his artwork in BATMAN #467. His art was more distinctive in this issue than in the Robin miniseries. Could it be the work of Andy Mushynsky that's making it better? Where did you find this guy?

Chuck Dixon's writing a great story. Keep up the good standards and maybe Drake will supplant Grayson as the best Robin.

Later,
Nelson Oliveira
P.O. Box HM 398
Hamilton HM BX
Bermuda

Now that's *praise.*

* * * * *

Dear Denny,

A few words that annoyed me in #467:

"My city," "But I own the street. I own the night," and "Gordon can hold the line for one night."

Batman of late has apparently become a raving egocentric.

I've never known Batman to talk like this before. He always used to believe that he was a pure necessity. He exists solely to fight crime, and crime stands in opposition to society. Batman exists because of crime, so he could never be bigger than society itself, which is what he's claiming here.

Either this means Mr. Dixon views the Batman in a radically different light to me, or he hasn't got complete control of where his words are taking the readers—or I've got it completely wrong and it's all part of some nifty plot.

The art impressed me more than the script. Tom's a very brave man, stepping into Norm's hallowed shoes, and I'm surprisingly not disappointed by what I see. Of course, Ms. Roy has a lot to do with this—are you aware it would only have taken 16 square millimeters to include ROY on the cover this month? Isn't her talent worth at least 16 square millimeters of recognition?

Anyway,
J.M. (Rudolpho) Hughes
Arfryn, Trefnant
Denbigh, Clwyd.
Wales LL16 5UF

You brought up some interesting points, J.M., so I did some checking at Gotham City Hall, and would you believe that he actually does own the night? Jeez, that guy's rich.

* * * * *

Dear Editor,

"Batman's good but he's not a killer. He's no match for me." Tell me, Sir Edmund—has there ever been any insanity in your family?

Even though a gang war begins in BATMAN #468, the basic tone was introspective rather than actionful. The story didn't move that far forward, but there were some interesting insights into the relationship between Tim and Bruce. Tim can tell when Batman is fibbing to him, and hurrah to that. It's unusual to see Tim lecturing Batman and Batman hanging his head and meekly accepting the lecture. You'd think Bruce would learn NOT to lie to his partners—keeping secrets from Jason Todd was partially responsible for his death.

And then there was the scene between "partners" King Snake and Lynx. I don't quite buy them as a dishonest version of Batman and Robin—Dorrance would kill her in two seconds if his own hide were at stake. But Lynx does seem to have an odd dependency on him, even though she's no doubt aware of that.

You're overdoing the Kevlar thing over the heart—that's the second time in a couple of months you've pulled that stunt. Once news got around somebody wore a Kevlar patch, I'd start going for the head.

Batman's slowness to admit Dorrance is alive strikes me as an anomaly. Should it be the Joker in the same situation, he'd assume he was alive because he's such a danger he'd have no choice *but* to admit it. Bad thing about Batman—he always assumes everybody else's enemies are less of a threat than his enemies.

As a Starman junkie, I have to praise the clean-cut art style of Mr. Tom Lyle. Especially enjoyed the tops of page 2 (the man and the shadow look equally dangerous) and page 6. A nose-thumb at those who say Robin can't look spooky.

Charles D. Brown
39 Stockton Street
Brentwood, NY 11717

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Dear Bat-Rockers,

Woah-lo! Things are really starting to shake. BATMAN #468 was, of course, another thriller. The plot thickens as Sir Edmund and Lynx plan their vengeance on Robin. I suspect this will really put Batman on edge. Think about it. He was so worried about having a new partner, and now he's having to face his first real challenge regarding that decision. If I were Batman, I don't think I could allow Robin out at all. Guess that's why I'm not Batman. My spastic colon couldn't take it. Keep the Rock Rollin'

Scott "Mr. Metal" Watson
921 Mt. Hope Avenue #2
Cincinnati, OH 45204

I was wondering why you weren't Batman.

* * * * *

Dear Batty Ones,

Part two of "Shadow Box" was excellent. Batman is in for one heck of a big war. Robin may be getting in over his head, also. The King Snake is out-for blood. Of course, I have my doubts whether that is truly the King Snake. He looks like him. He appears to have the same flashbacks as the Snake. He has scars on his back that Sir Edmund would have. What gives me doubt is the fact that Lynx so easily evades his blows and even cuts him. Sir Edmund Dorrance was supposed to be the best in the world at unarmed combat. Lynx was simply a street urchin taken under his wing. Now she can dodge his kicks and wound him just for the sake of making her point? I don't know.

Bruce is going to get himself in serious trouble if he keeps this up. Alfred and Tim should remind him of how he got when Jason died. Alfred practically had to Scotch-tape Bruce together every night. The high-and-mighty Batman would do well to remember the lessons he has learned. He should also learn to be honest with Tim. Once the King Snake is defeated, Batman and Robin will be back on the streets, laying their lives on the line for each other. That will require that they trust each other beyond any doubts. If Bruce continues to lie to Tim, that trust will be severed, which could lead to a fatal moment's hesitation on the battlefield.

I guess we'll find out the answers to questions and the resolutions to mysteries in the next installment of "Shadow Box." Chuck Dixon is an excellent writer. Tom Lyle's art is equally fantastic. The one thing I noticed in this issue was that Mr. Lyle tends to draw ribs that stick out a little too much.

I guess that's it. Take it easy.

Michael J. Church
Bowie, MD

* * * * *

Dear Winged-Ones,

I have read BATMAN #468, and am really enjoying the "Shadow Box" storyline. It's good to see the King Snake and Lynx again. Anyway, the first panel on page 8—isn't that black-clad, twisted perception of Robin in the King Snake's nightmare a perfect image of a new villain? An archenemy for Tim. A dark Robin. Raven, maybe. He could be what the Joker is to Batman. Good idea, huh?

Jeremy L. Newell
One Glenhaven Drive
Versailles, KY 40383

* * * * *

Dear Bat-men,

The conclusion of "Shadow Box" was fast-paced, stylish, and well-done. The King Snake, or Sir Edmund, certainly earned his place in Batman's Rogues Gallery, and certainly deserves an appearance in WHO'S WHO. Likewise, Lynx is a dynamic character, sharp-witted and hardened by her experiences. Chuck Dixon succeeded in furthering the depth of these two villains in just three issues and made the whole trilogy intense, moody, and emotion-packed. The fact that Lynx escaped and Sir Edmund is still alive means that they could return in the future, which would be great if Lady Shiva were back in the picture as well. Now that Edmund knows the truth about her, things could get even more interesting! Tom Lyle and Scott Hanna did a terrific job with these two, not to mention the heroes of the issue. I think this final chapter is the best-illustrated (and most vibrantly-colored) in the trilogy, which leads me to more comments:

The battle between the Snake and the Batman was one of the best choreographed to come out of the Bat-books in quite a while. I especially liked the way Bats used his sometimes-cumbersome cape to his advantage by weighing down the ends and striking Sir Edmund in the face with it. This surprised both Sir Edmund and the reader, so it made an effective weapon, along with the infrared goggles. I don't view this as cheating on his opponent, but rather as respecting Edmund's advantages in the dark. They were evenly matched, so the Snake's defeat was even more gratifying as a result. Characterization was also present and thoughtfully scripted on every page, from the fiery Ghost Dragons to the brief scene with Commissioner Gordon.

The final pages, with Tim rescuing Batman and his comments about Lynx, were even better. The last panels with Batman and Robin were tense and emotion-filled. Tim saying, "I'm not Jason Todd!" was the perfect dramatic flourish to this series. Thanks, everyone, for a sequel that was even more exciting than last year's Robin title!

Neil Ahlquist
4022 Madison St. NE Apt. #2
Minneapolis, MN 55421

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Dear Kelley,

Re: BATMAN #469

I think the King Snake was turned into a garden snake. Time could have been saved with a garden hose.

I did enjoy Batman's touch of humor on page 3.

Is this the first mention of steel weights sewn into the points of Bats' cape? It's a V-8 idea.

Melissa Page
236 New Salem Loop
Nortonville, KY 42442

Chuck didn't think it was the first time, but nobody else could remember any specific examples of previous use. Anyone out there know?

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Dear Denny and Kelley,

In this expansive comics world we read in, we take much for granted. We know certain titles will be on the stands every month, faithfully, and we accept that. And there are the creators whom we also take for granted, who will always bring us pleasure and entertainment, yet fail to rise above the pack for reasons unknown.

Chuck Dixon and Tom Lyle are two very good comics professionals. While they've yet to achieve mass industry recognition, they represent the backbone of the market, creators who can work in a variety of genres with a variety of characters and still maintain a certain level of entertainment. This was clear in "Shadow Box" where we read what appears to simply be a sequel to the King Snake storyline of the Robin miniseries. Whether it is simply that or more, the story on its own holds up. This is what a reader expects when he picks up a Batman book: colorful characters, deadly villains, and action. Chuck Dixon does not insult the reader's intelligence nor attempts something abstract and arty. Tom Lyle's layouts are his own, and his style is developing nicely.

It occurred to me, reading BATMAN #469, that this Robin is quickly creating his own universe of characters and situations different from Batman's. While the two may meet, as in this issue, the Tim Drake Robin is an individual, and perhaps the strongest Robin-individual Robin. Dick Grayson took years to find an identity and begin to separate himself from the Batman, but Tim seems to have achieved this already. He has his own rogues gallery of enemies, and his own unique capabilities. The thought that comes up is, after learning all he can, will he still need Batman?

I also wanted to comment on Lynx. She could very well become Robin's Catwoman. While evil and deadly, she yet retains a unique and sexy role that could develop into something more. As seen in the Robin miniseries, Tim is at the age when he is looking at girls—women—with a certain eye. I'd like to see this issue explored, even tangentially, as it could only add to the depth of his character. It would also add an intriguing element in comparison with the rather sexless Batman.

It is nice to have something to depend on in life. The current BATMAN title is one of these. You may not always get the recognition you deserve, but it is out there.

Mark Lucas
1100 Granville Avenue #2
Los Angeles, CA 90049

Thanks, Mark.

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NEXT ISSUE: Be here next month for the beginning of a Batman story unlike any you've ever read. It's the first part of "A Gotham Tale" and it's brought to you by John Wagner and Cam Kennedy, with a cover by Tom Taggart. You do NOT want to miss this one. Trust me.

—Scott Peterson
new but trustworthy

From the Den

I spent a total of perhaps three hours with Anton Furst, two over dinner at a restaurant in lower Manhattan and another in Jenette Kahn's office discussing a project Jenette and I were trying to involve him in. We were asking him to design our version of Gotham City, one different from the Gotham that had won him an Academy Award for his work on the first Batman movie, and to our surprise and delight, he agreed.

A few months later, when a portfolio arrive from Anton's Los Angeles studio, we were amazed. He had given a reality to what had been, for all our blather to the contrary, a very nebulous concept; now, for the first time in its 50 years of existence, Gotham had the shape and form of a real place. We could understand these grim avenues, believe that extravagant events could occur in them, and we were certain that Anton's drawings would inspire other artists, those who render Gotham in our magazines. The drawings themselves were splendid, worth putting a frame around. (You can see five of them in LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT #27. I only wish high-speed printing could do justice to the pencilwork.)

Anton died last week in Los Angeles. Although I didn't know him well, I mourn for him. And I know his vision will inform my world and work for years to come.